



Employee News

Governor M. Jodi Rell

Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara

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"Ask the Commissioner"

If you have a question for Commissioner O'Meara, you are invited to e-mail

Joan Barnish at

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Watch for your response in future newsletter editions.

Newsworthy articles should be forwarded to your regional DMR Employee News contacts:

North/Linda Schaefer

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DMR UNVEILS SAFETY AWARENESS CAMPAIGN



Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara and Deputy Commissioner Kathryn duPree have declared June as **Safety Awareness Month**. The department has embarked on a major safety campaign aimed at both public and private employees, to reinforce the importance of providing a safe environment for the more than 19,000 consumers served by the agency.

The campaign was developed over the past several months and will address safety issues related to our consumers well being whether in their homes, at work or traveling in the community.

"We have numerous safety systems in place to protect individuals with mental retardation that we serve," said Commissioner O'Meara. "However, we know what truly keeps people safe is the knowledge, skill, attention and caring of direct support staff. These systems and processes are only as good as the employees' commitment to safety."



The Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner have traveled statewide holding town meetings to promote safety throughout the department. In addition, over 800 "**Commissioner's Safety Message**" DVD's have been distributed to

both the private sector and public day and residential programs, group homes and offices. The message is clear, the department's safety initiative is targeting the day-to-day vigilance it takes to keep our consumers safe.

Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara and Deputy Commissioner Kathryn duPree seen here promoting the Safety Awareness Campaign at the West Region

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SAFETY CAMPAIGN KICKS OFF *continued from page one*

Over the next several months, the department will continually remind both the public and private sector employees of the importance of safety in the workplace, not only for the consumer but for the employees as well. A Safety Summit will convene with providers, council members, staff, labor unions, Office of Protection and Advocacy, family members and consumers in July. This summit will speak directly to the processes the department has enhanced over the years to protect our consumers.

In addition, residential and day service teams have been reviewing the health and safety screening of every individual to assure it is current and that identified assessments have been completed and shared with staff. The teams will also review the individual plan to make certain it addresses each risk area and that action plans are in place to help staff manage the risk.

“Connecticut is considered a leader in our field for many reasons and what keeps us in this leadership position is the collective strength, commitment and team work of staff,” said Commissioner O’Meara. “As we developed flexible service options for the people we support, promoted inclusion and choice, and assisted people to become more independent, we have never lost our focus on our most basic responsibility, to keep people safe, healthy and free from harm.”

FOCUS ON CONSUMER SAFETY—A PRIORITY

Over the next several months, *DMR Employee News* will focus on the many different aspects of Safety Awareness in the department. The first focus is on **Consumer Safety**. As most direct care workers are aware, **Safety** is not just about helping someone in and out of a car, but the day to day, minute to minute vigilance in caring for an individual with mental retardation. An individual’s physical and cognitive abilities, likes, dislikes and preferences, health, routine, eating, and medication all combine to make services and supports unique to every consumer.

It is all of our responsibilities to keep our consumers safe. We need to know the individual and know the best way to keep them safe in their homes, at work or in the community. We need to know what medication the individual uses, the dosages, side effects, medication interactions and how the individual actually responds to the medications he or she are taking.

Many risks face each and every one of our consumers every day, but for some none are more important than risks associated with eating. For our consumers, Pica, Dysphagia and/or other swallowing risks need to be addressed in a consumer specific manner. We have a responsibility to know the proper eating and positioning techniques, aspiration reflux precautions, the appropriate use of adaptive equipment and most importantly food and liquid consistencies. All these factors contribute to providing the safest environment for our consumers and the best protection for their well being.

BEHIND THE SCENE

As the department began developing the **Safety Awareness Campaign**, it reached out to those who handle safety everyday. A committee of DMR employees from Health Services, Human Resources, Training, Communication and Quality Assurance was formed to target safety issues for the campaign. A final campaign initiative was agreed upon shortly thereafter.

All those who participated in this very important campaign should be congratulated for taking the time to make Safety a Priority and developing a campaign that will enhance and protect the lives of the people we serve.